

Introduction to fishing



Fishing is a great spare-time activity that can be enjoyed by everyone. In Ireland there are many places where you can go to fish - canals, rivers, ponds, lakes and our sea shores.

In order to be successful at fishing you will need to know a bit about the fish you want to catch and have the right equipment to fish with.

There are many species of fish in our Irish waters and can be divided into fresh water and sea water fish. Fish are smart and you will also need to be smart to catch them. Knowing where to find them, their habits and best bait to use is a key skill.

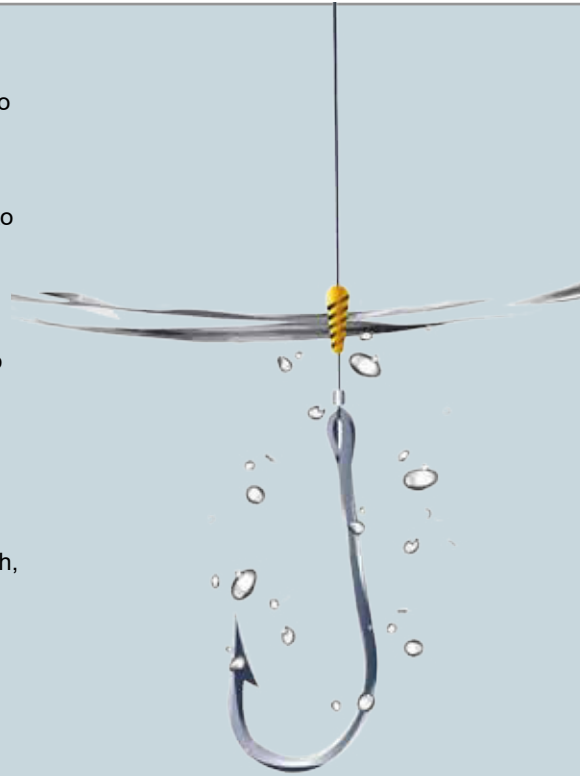
Of course you will need a fishing rod, reel and some fishing tackle along with warm and waterproof clothing. A small seat is also useful, as it can take time and patience to catch a fish.

Our aim is to catch, photograph and release (CPR). Catch a fish, record your catch with your camera, and then release the fish. Sometimes when there are a large quantity of fish they can be caught as food but that is not our primary aim.

Fishing is an outdoor activity and you will enter into many wild and wonderful outdoor environments. Being in nature is a wonderful experience. You will see and observe many things - wild animals and birds, insects, wild flowers as well as the clouds in the skies. Fish live in this environment and rely on insects and water borne food to survive. They like shadowy places along the river bank, or seeking food among the seaweed on the ocean floor.

It will take time to know everything about fish and the skill of fishing but it all begins by taking small steps. Most people begin fishing by going fishing with a friend, who leads them some equipment and helps them get to grips with the skill of fishing.

It is a great journey of discovery - enjoy your adventure.



Some interesting facts about fish.

Fish have the senses of sight, taste, smell, hearing, and touch, as well as other special senses to help them survive.

They are cold-blooded—their body temperature is about the same as the water around them.

Not all fish have scales, but all fish are covered with a thin skin.

Scales are protective plates that are covered by the skin. When a scale is lost, its “pocket” can become infected before the skin heals over and a new scale develops.

The muscles and fins of fish are designed to propel them through the water in search of food and to help them escape from enemies.

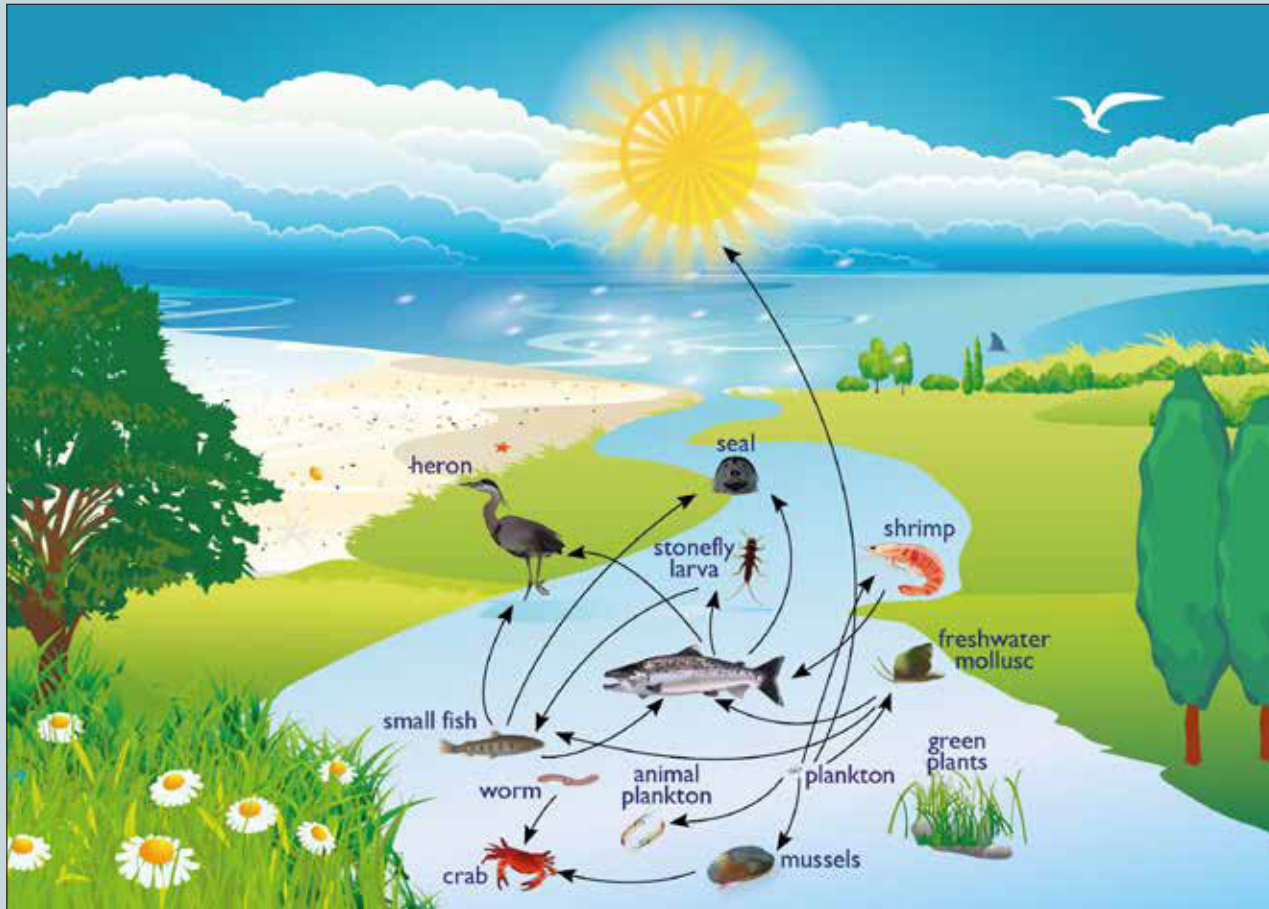
Fish breathe mainly through gills that take oxygen from the water and send it into the bloodstream.

Most fish reproduce by the female laying eggs that the male fertilizes in the water. The females of some species may lay millions of eggs, while some other species lay only a few hundred.



Fishing





Water Food webs & Chains

A food web shows the inter-connection between different food sources.

It shows 'what is eating what' - in a fresh water environment this first happens at the microscopic level. Plants release small nutrients into the water on which the smallest animals, plankton, eat them.

These plankton are in turn eaten by larger plankton, worms, larva and mollusc's. Flies are also attracted to the water surface by this food source as it floats to the surface.

The smallest fish eat larva, worms, animal plankton and flies. Larger fish then eat smaller fish, mollusc, worms.

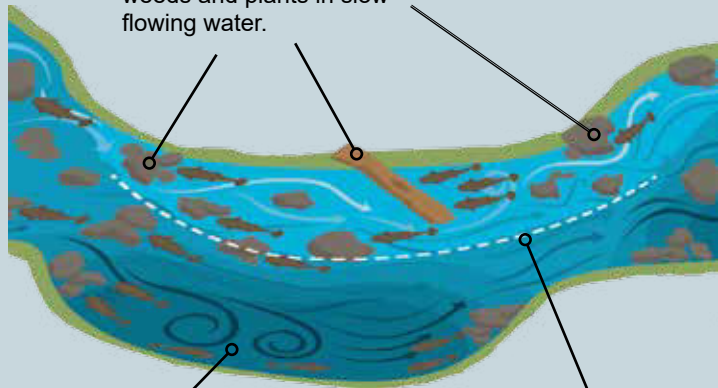
Birds, otters, kingfishers and other land based animals are attracted to the waterway by seeking to catch fish.

Food webs such as these are common in many habitats and are maintained by a careful balance of nature. If any part of the web or chain is broken then this special place is in danger. Pollution, for example or over fishing can kill off the various forms of life within the water source and affect the balance. Larger fish, for example, can also dominate a food web or chain and clear a water source of smaller fish. Likewise a number of heron nesting near a pond can have a big affect on fish stocks within the pond.

Understanding the food web or chain of a water source can help to determine the type of bait to use when fishing. By observation of a water course you can quickly spot the flies, and smaller water borne insects that are attractive to fish.

Finding fish

Fish hide behind rocks, logs, weeds and plants in slow flowing water.



Some fish seek deeper water

Watch for the drop area off of the current

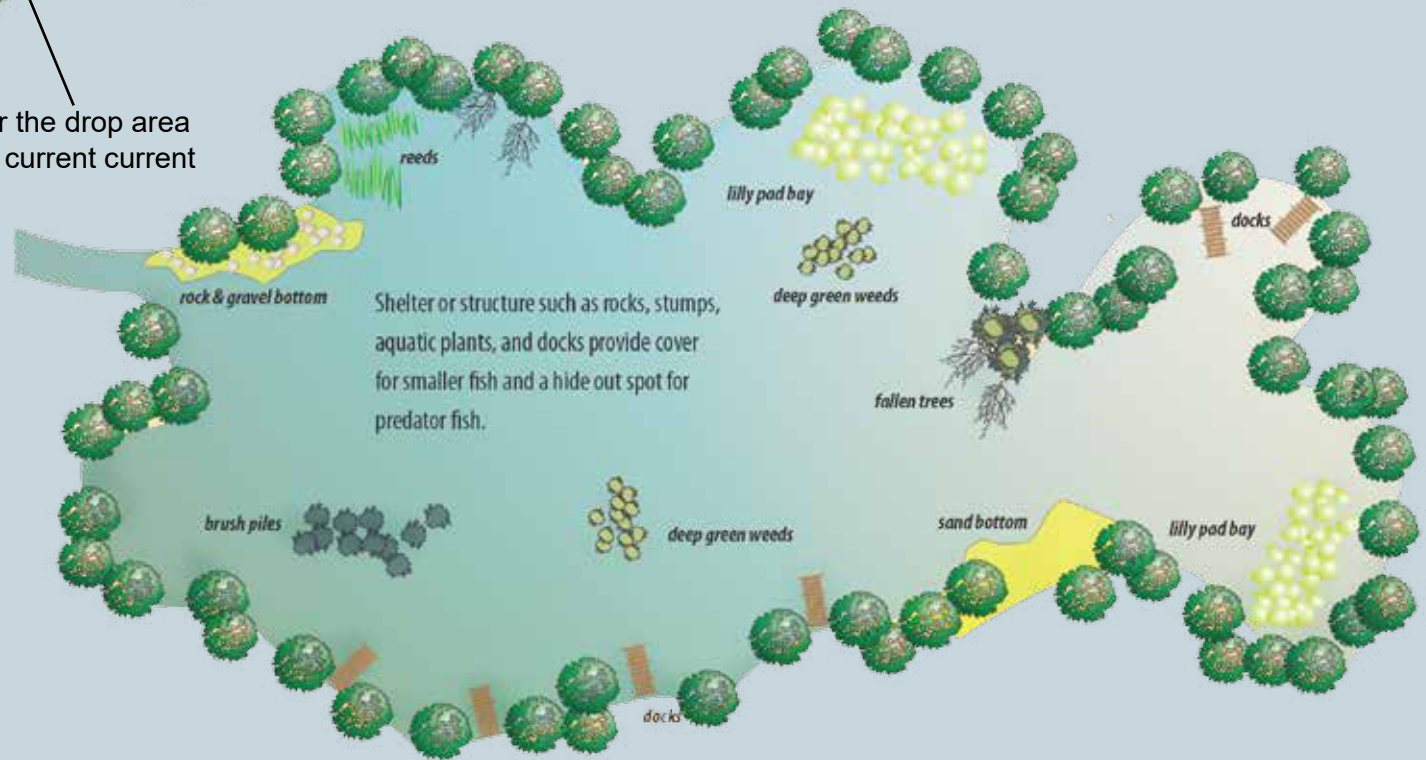
Each fishing habitat is different and by knowing how fish live in these habitats it will be easier to direct your bait to these areas and catch a fish.

Fish like cover of all kinds and places where food is easy to get. Fallen branches, weed cover, lily pad plants, deep pools and shaded areas are all places that fish like to be.

Bigger predator fish will cruise around a wide area, whereas smaller fish will gather around underwater plants and rocks out of the eye of the predator.

Fishing is as much about observation, knowledge of an area, as it is about casting a line into the water. Can you see fish popping up to catch flies on the surface? Can you see small fish near the bank? Are there trees hanging over a water providing shade?

Take a while before you cast your line to 'take it all in' get to know and become an expert about your fishing location.



Fish Habitats





Brown Trout



Bream



Char



Perch



Eel



Pike



Dace



Roach

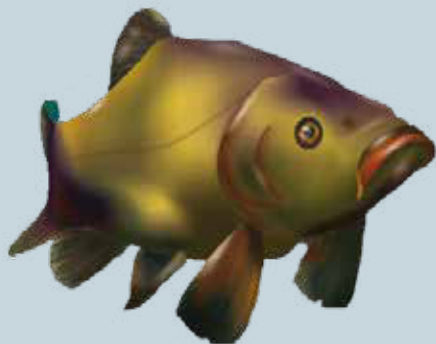


Sea Trout

Salmon



Carp



Tench



Stoneloach



Minnow



Gudgeon



Rudd



Stickleback



River Lamprey

Freshwater Fish





Bass

Cod

Monkfish

John Dory

Dogfish

Blue Shark

Conger eel

Haddock

Flounder

Turbot

Porbeagle Shark

Hooked back Ray

Pollock

Garfish

Plaice

Mackerel

Ling

Tope

Skate

Mullet



Red Gurnard



Wrasse



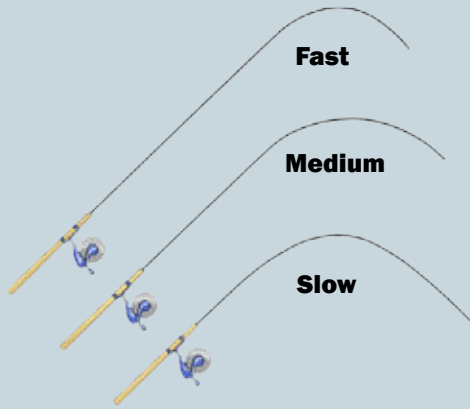
Whiting



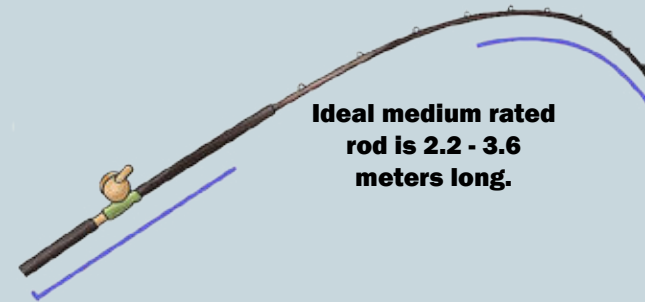
Gilthead bream

Sea water fish





Rods are constructed so that the tip of the rod can bend. How much a rod can bend will be determined by the weight and strength of the fish you are catching. This is called the action of the rod. A medium action rod is a good starting point.



Fishing rods can be bought in all shapes and sizes and before you choose a fishing rod you will need to ask yourself a few questions.

- What type of fishing will I be doing.**
- What type of fish will I be fishing for**
- Where will I be fishing**
- Your budget**

If you are new to fishing then we suggest you talk to a friend who is already fishing or a local angling shop or fishing club who will provide detailed advice and suggestions.

In general terms most people start fishing using a spinning rod. These rods are a middle range rod and will allow you to catch most of the common varieties of fish both in freshwater and sea shore conditions. You will need bigger rods to catch the bigger varieties and have the ability to cast your bait further.

Most people start fishing by buying a beginners pack of equipment from a good fishing tackle shop. This will include a rod and reel and some basic tackle. The staff in these shops have a lot of knowledge and will steer you in the right direction. As you become more experienced you can advance onto more expensive rods and reels.

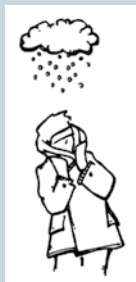


Fishing Rods





Waterproof



Warm



Windproof



Light to carry

Fishing is an outdoor activity and keeping dry and warm is important to its enjoyment. To keep warm, you can either have one big heavy overcoat or a number of different items of clothing each adding another layer to the heat retaining properties of your body. The overcoat idea is obviously impractical so those who venture into the open should use the layering method to maintain and control body temperature.

There are 4 different layers to consider which can be combined depending on weather conditions. Each layer has a unique role to play. The object of each layer is to provide and retain heat, trapping a layer of air that can provide insulation and allow excess body heat and perspiration to escape.



The extremities of the body, the head, hands and feet also need protection. A large proportion of your body heat is lost through the head.



The first layer which is next to your skin should consist of a thermal vest with long sleeves in winter or a plain cotton T-shirt in summer. This layer should be close fitting but not too tight. The idea of this layer is to absorb perspiration and allow it to pass to the outer layer



The second layer could be a wool shirt or a polo neck shirt or pullover. It should be loose fitting and provides protection for both the neck and the wrists. Sleeves should be capable of being rolled up so that in warm weather the body temperature can be controlled with ease. In warm weather this layer could be replaced by the outside layer.



The third layer needs to be 'woolly' such as a woollen pullover or a fleece jacket. The main features are heat control so a zip front is ideal for this purpose. The idea of this layer is to trap large pockets of warm air and insulate your body from the cold.

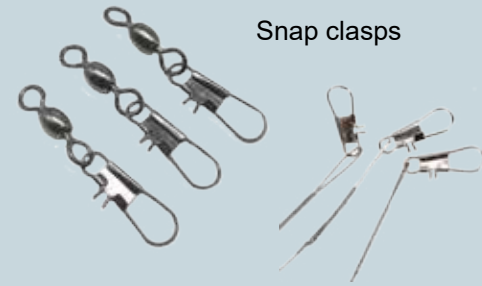


The outer layer should be a jacket that will protect you from the wind and rain, ideally made of breathable fabric.

What to wear - layers



Tackle Box



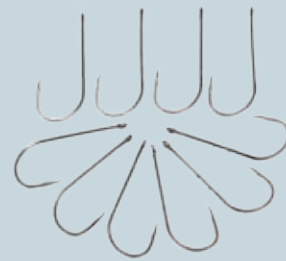
Snap clasps



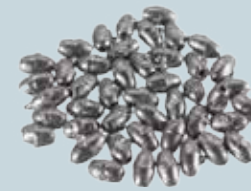
Swivels



Shot



Fishing hooks



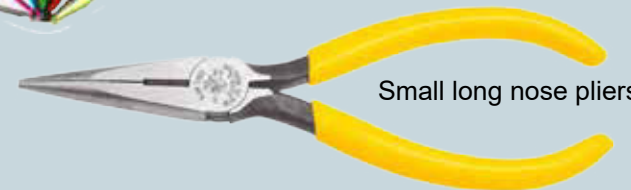
Shot



Weights

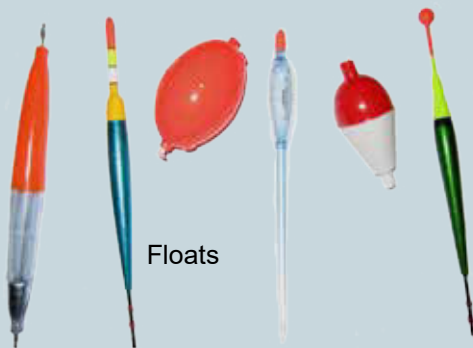


Fishing lures



Small long nose pliers

Fishing line



Floats



single

double

treble

barbless

small barb

large barb

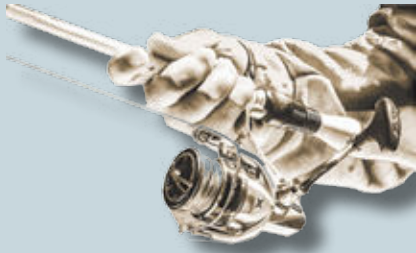


Fishing clasp knife

Fishing gear



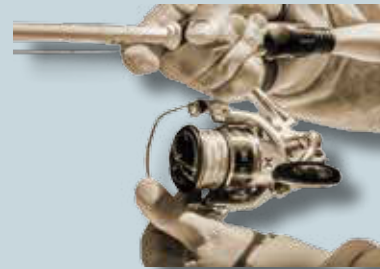
Casting



Reel in your line so that 30mm remain of the line, bait and weights. To cast - hold the rod as shown. Turn the reel so that the line is positioned with the bale arm and line next to your fingers.



Place your fore finger under the line and draw up the line and hold the line next to the rod.



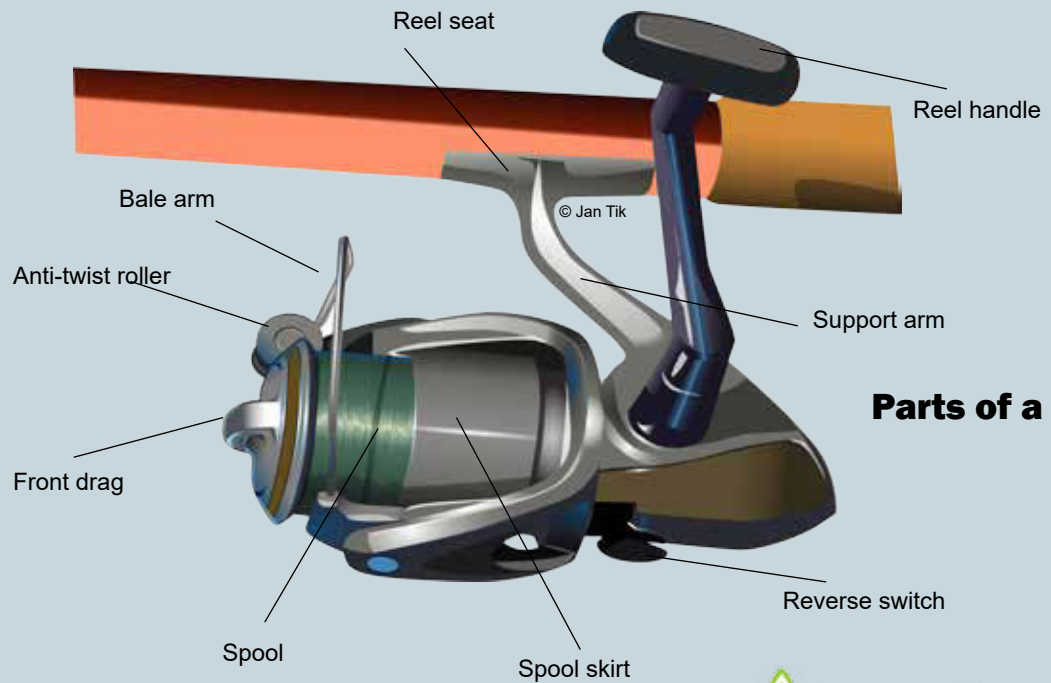
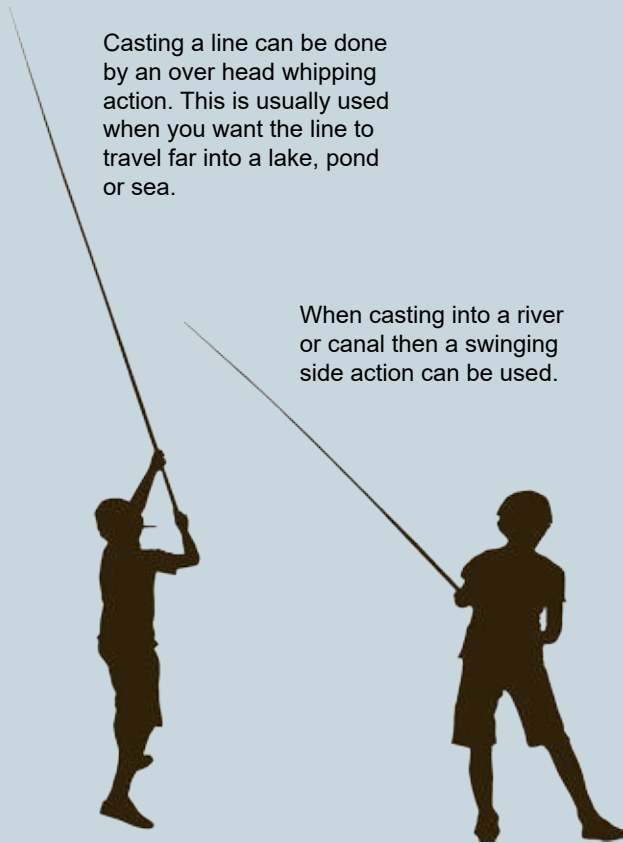
Release the bale arm on the reel with your other hand and as you cast release the line so it can run free from the reel.



When your line has settled clip the bale arm back into position and take up the slack on your reel by turning the handle.

Casting a line can be done by an over head whipping action. This is usually used when you want the line to travel far into a lake, pond or sea.

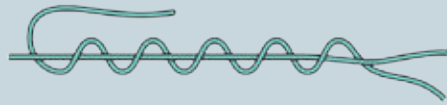
When casting into a river or canal then a swinging side action can be used.



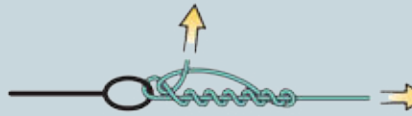
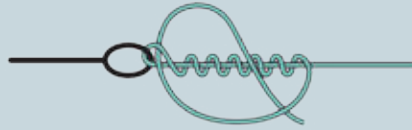
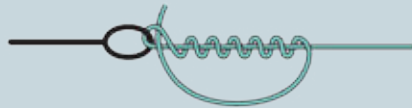
Parts of a Reel

Casting & Reel





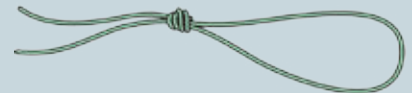
Blood Knot



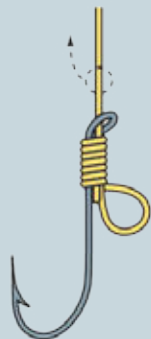
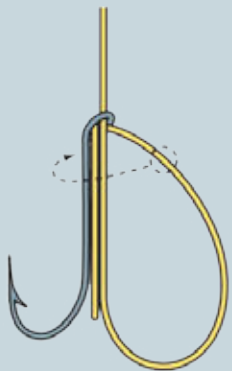
Clinch Knot



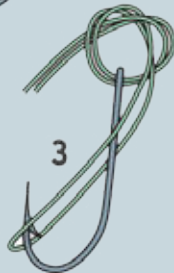
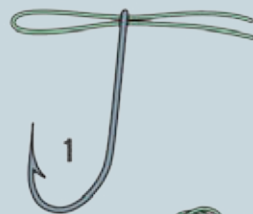
Turtle Knot



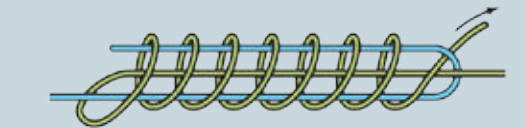
Double surgeon loop Knot



Snelling Knot



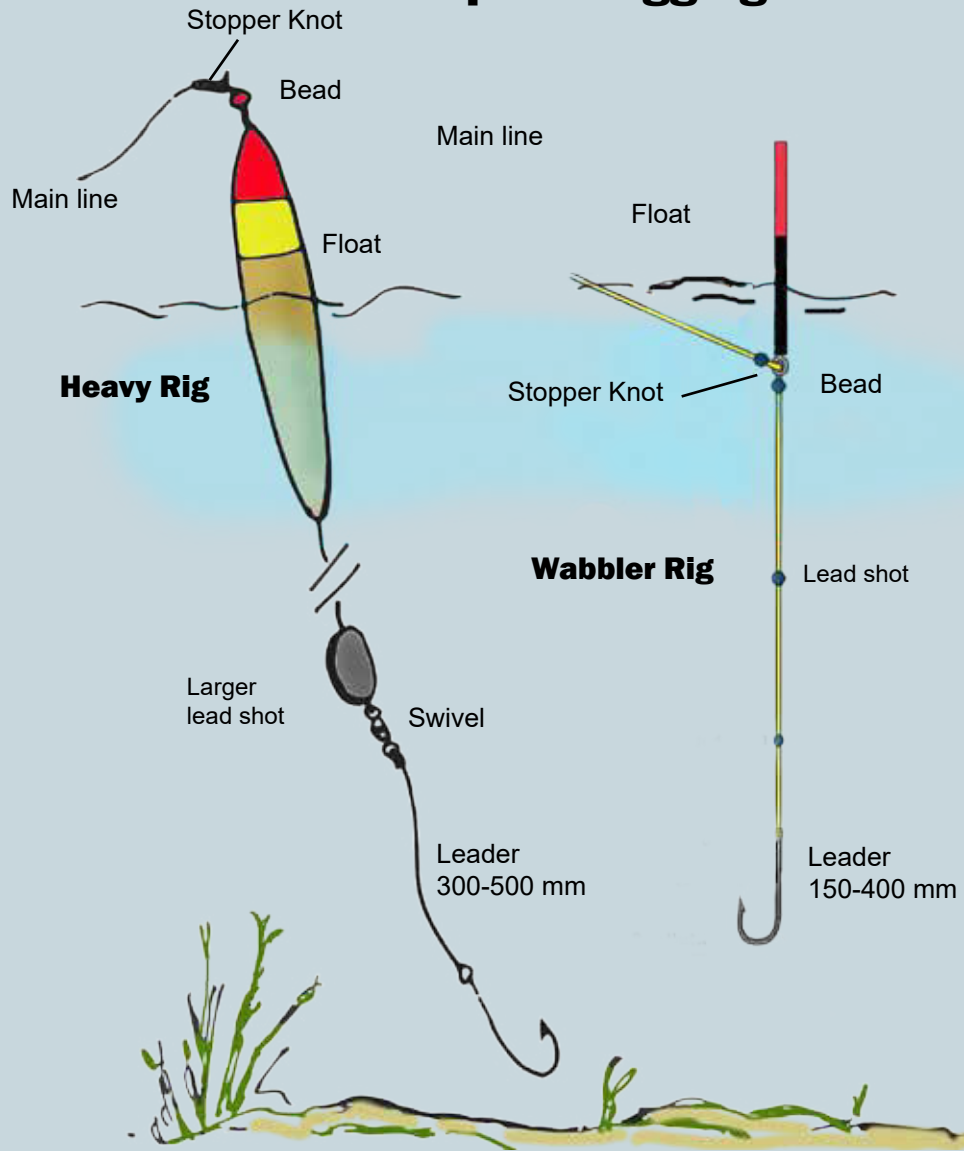
Palomer Knot



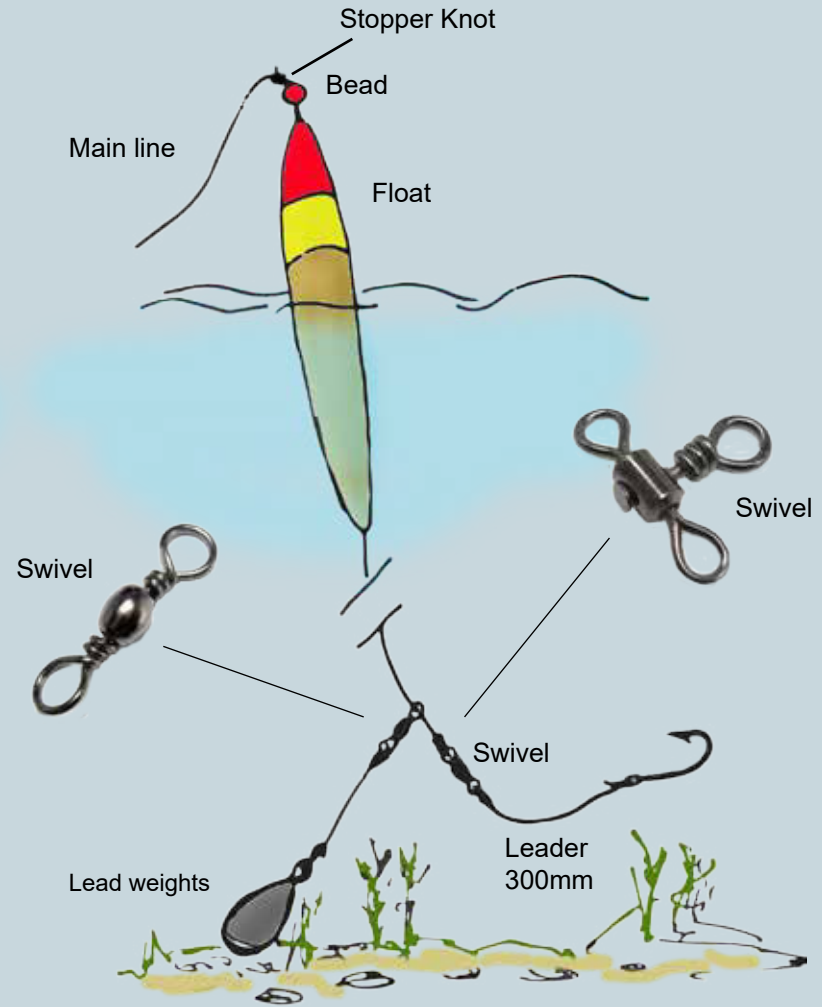
Wire to mono Knot

Fishing knots

Slipfloat rigging

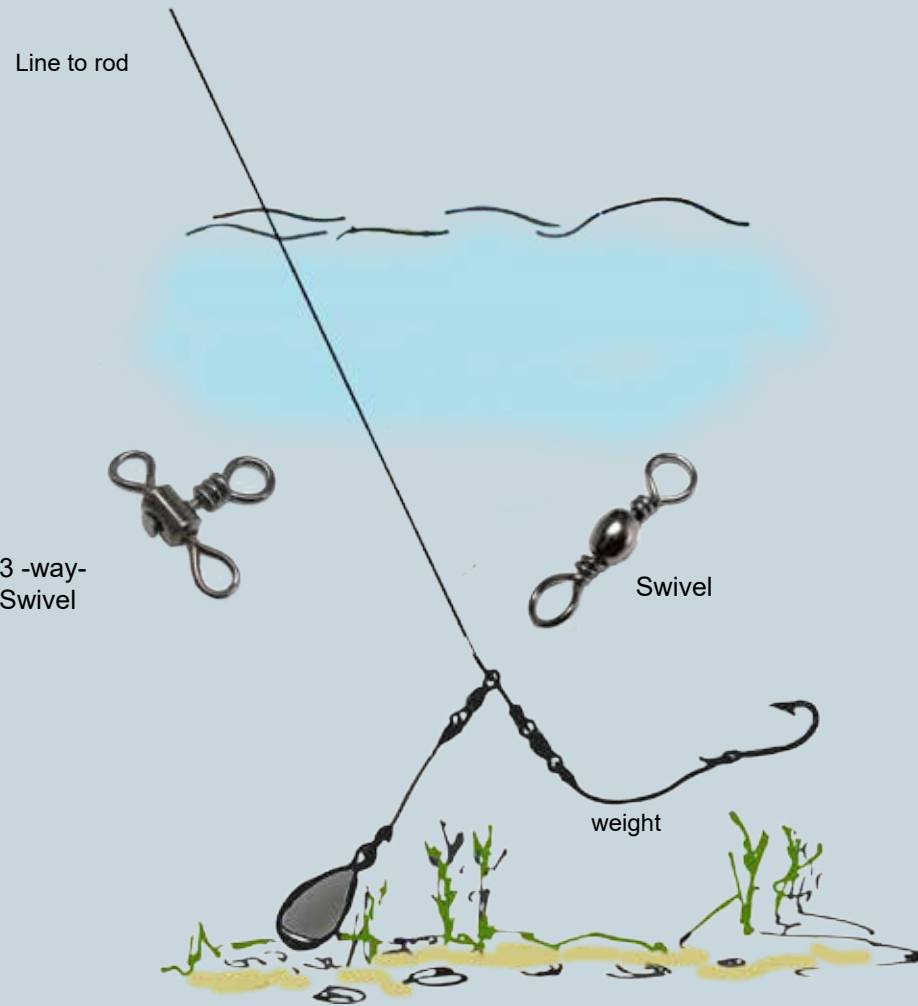


Paternoster Rigging

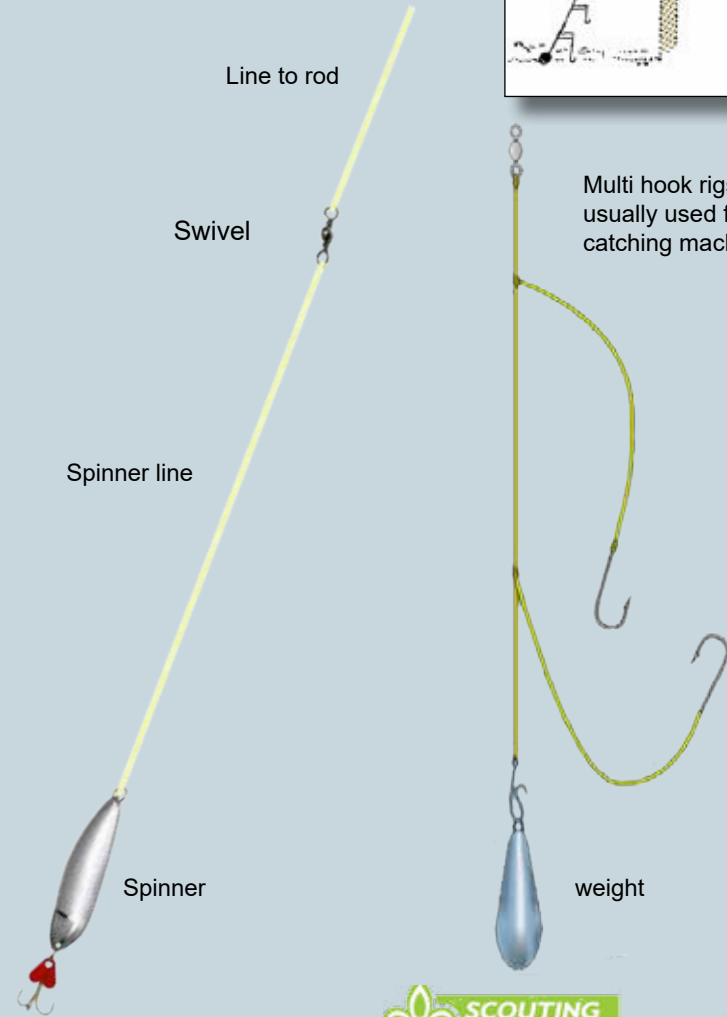
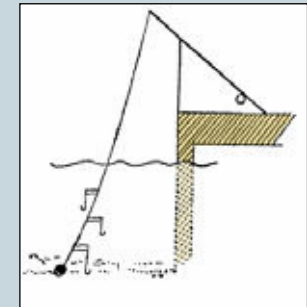


Fishing Rigs

Ledger rigs



When sea fishing a bite is normally detected by a pull on the rod tip rather than by the bob of a float due to wave conditions and distance from casting point.



Sea Fishing rigs

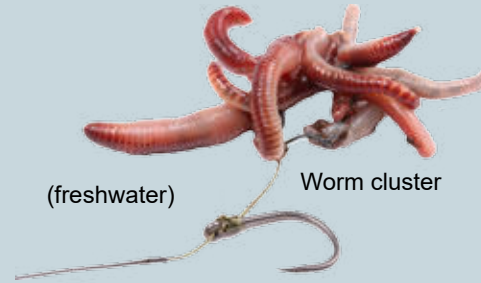




Maggots (freshwater)

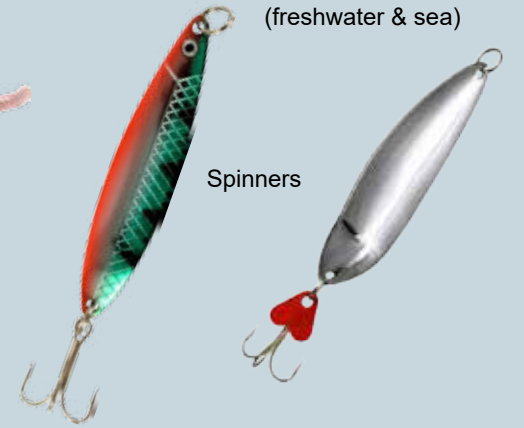


Worm (freshwater)



(freshwater)

Worm cluster



(freshwater & sea)

Spinners

Crab meat needs to be bound to hooks with thread or small elastic bands



Groundbait balls are created by mixing groundbait with water and adding in some sweetcorn and some hemp seeds.



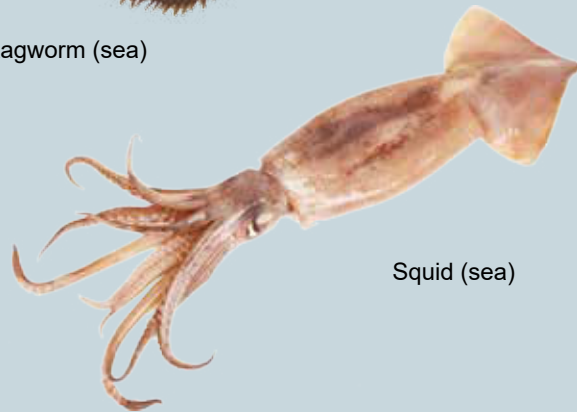
Mackerel strips (sea)



Crab (sea)



Ragworm (sea)



Squid (sea)



Baiting a hook with maggot for a wabbling rig



Lugworm (sea)



Sand eels (sea)

Bait





When the fish takes your bait and you have it on the line - play the fish and bring it in slowly.

Have a friend give you a hand to net the fish as it comes near the bank



Take a picture of your catch.

The landing and returning process needs to be completed as quickly as possible so as not to damage or place the fish under unnecessary stress.

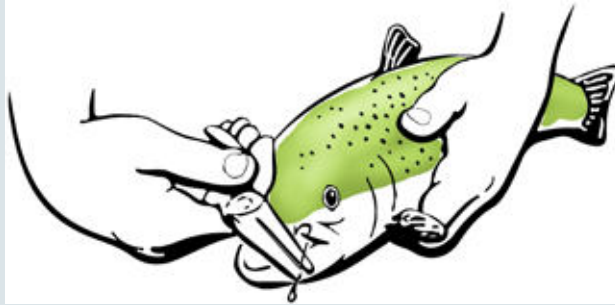


Catching & Landing



Step 1

Hold the fish firmly on the ground and remove the hook carefully from the fish



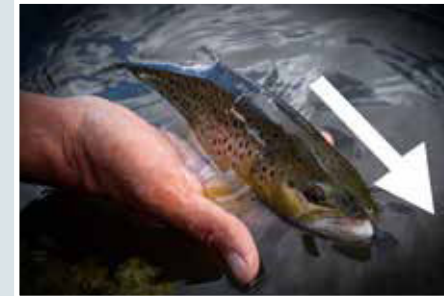
Step 2

Hold the fish firmly but gentle and place it back in the water. Let the fish become aware of its surrounding then let it swim away.



Fish CPR

Fish can only survive out of water for a short time. When fish are being returned to the water they need to be placed in the water carefully to allow water to flow through their gills, resume breathing and recover from their ordeal before they are released.



In moving water, gently hold the fish facing the current to allow water to flow through its gills. Release the fish when they are able to swim away.



If a fish is slow to respond - In still water, gently hold the fish with two hands, and move the fish in a figure of eight motion to help the fish move water through its gills. Release the fish when they are capable of swimming away.

Returning



A Responsible Angler is someone that...

- **Respects other anglers' rights**
- **Buys a fishing license/permit where appropriate**
- **Is aware of fishing regulations**
- **Respects the rights of property owners**
- **Catches, photographs and releases (CPR)**
- **Releases unwanted fish quickly and unharmed**
- **Keeps fish only to eat**
- **Never litters or pollutes and observes 'Leave no Trace' principles**
- **Knows and follows boating and fishing regulations**
- **Shares his/her knowledge with others**
- **Learns about the different species of fish in their area**
- **Gives back by getting involved in conservation programmes or activities**

Fishing ethics



Leave No Trace

When fishing away from direct contact with civilization, we enter an area that is unspoiled and beautiful - a natural environment. Leave No Trace principles state that we should pass through an area and leave no trace of our presence.

While fishing you may wish to stay overnight in a location.

Where we camp, light fires, cook and dispose of waste of all kinds is an important consideration.

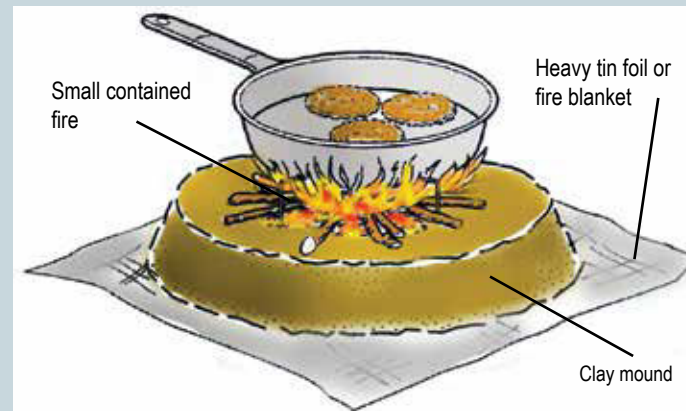
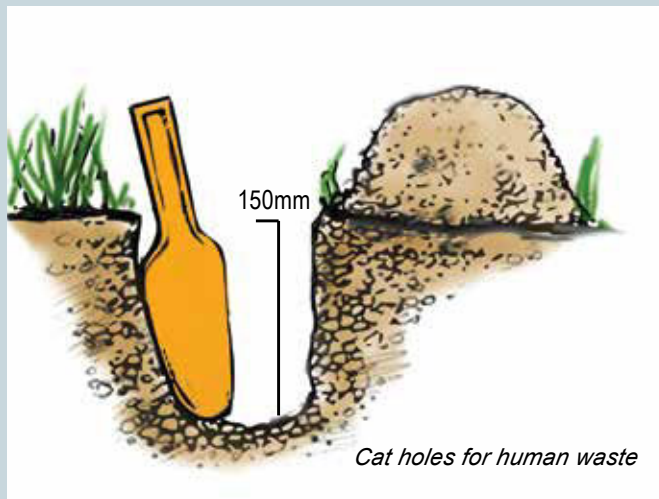
All shelters (tents, fishing shelters, bivouacs) should be placed in locations that minimise damage to the surface of the ground.

Ideally cooking should be done on stoves. If a small fire is to be used then mound fires are the suggested method of fire setting and use.

Waste, whether from food or humans, needs to be disposed of properly. Carry in - carry out is the simple principle for food and other produces however for human waste a small cat hole is best practice.

Carry a small trowel in your kit for this purpose along with some toilet paper and hand sanitizer.

Cat holes should be dug at least 80 paces from waterways and trails and to a depth of 150 mm. When used fill in and 'repair' the hole so no evidence appears of your action.



Mound Fires

Mound fires can be constructed on many durable surfaces without destroying the earth beneath it. A covering made of a fire blanket or heavy duty tin foil is placed on the surface. Then a mound of clay is placed on top, on which the fire is built.

Ideally, when travelling on the trail or in a backwoods situation you will bring with you, in your kit, a trowel, some heavy duty tinfoil or flame proof cloth and a few small plastic bags. The fire is easy to construct - first choose a location, what you are looking for is a durable or scrub surface free of vegetation. The sandy or pebble banks beside a river are ideal.

Collect the clay, sand for the mound in the plastic bags and build a mound at least 150 mm high, this thick layer of clay will insulate the ground from the heat of the fire. The tin foil or cloth gives extra protect both to the direct heat and from sparks and stray embers that might fall to the ground.

The size of the mound circle should be wide enough to allow for cooking utensils and the spread of coals from the fire. When you no longer need the fire the clay and embers can be returned to the source and spread around so that no trace exists of your presence.

What ever you carry in - you must carry out - leave no trace

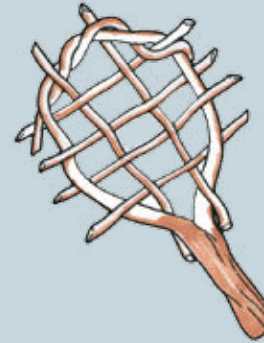
Leave no trace - Fires



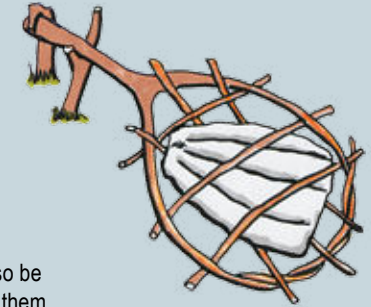
Fish



Fish is an excellent food for cooking over a fire or bar-b-que. It needs some preparation first, if caught in the wild, and is easy to cook. You can buy some fish in your local supermarket and bring it with you, but it is so much better to catch your own.

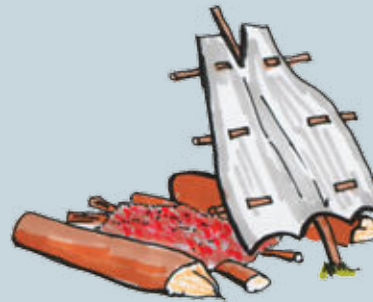


Broiling method - Construct a broiler as shown and place your fish in it. Cook over hot embers turning regularly.



Fish cook very quickly so be careful you do not burn them.

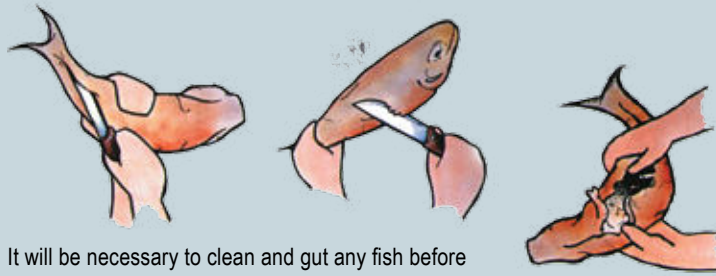
Planked method - Pin the fish, flesh side forward, on a plank or piece of flat board and cook by reflected heat. Place a knob of butter on the fish when it is cooking and later a splash of lemon - delicious!



Wrap method - wrap fish in grass and cover in mud and place on the fire, or wrap fish in cabbage leaf and pin together with small twigs and place on the fire.



Note: Cabbage leaves can replace tin foil in most instances when using backwoods cooking recipes. It is important that at no time should rhubarb leaves be used, as they contain a highly toxic substance.



It will be necessary to clean and gut any fish before you cook it. The fish should be cleaned as follows:-

- Wash the fish thoroughly in clean water.
- Remove the scales by scraping with the back of a knife(that is, not the sharp edge), working from the tail towards the head.
- Cut the spine at a point just behind the gills and tear the head off with a steady, slow, forward motion. If you are careful, the fish innards will come out with it. (Dispose of carefully)
- Slice the belly open from tail to gills and thoroughly wash the inside.
- Finally, cut off the fins and tail and cook as desired.



Cooking

Stay calm and don't panic

If you do fall into the water - first and foremost remain calm and don't panic. Allow your self to float in the water. Shout for help. Look around you - if you can reach the bank, swim for shore. Once out of the water, remove wet clothes, dry yourself off, Put on new clothes and get warm.

If you see someone
IN TROUBLE 

- 1 THINK** Do NOT put **YOURSELF** in **DANGER** 
- 2 SHOUT** for **HELP!** Call **999**  The Fire and Rescue Service
- 3 REACH** with a stick or a pole 
- 4 THROW** a rope or... something that will **FLOAT** 



If you fall into the water it is very important that you get dry and warm to prevent shock and hypothermia.

Life jackets

Every young person should know how to swim. If you can't swim it is a good idea to get some lessons. Accidents will happen without warning and can occur at any time so - **be prepared.**

You should always wear a life jacket when fishing from a boat, rocky sea shore or pier.

There is always the possibility of slipping, reaching too far or being pulled into the water by a wave, large fish or just unbalancing.

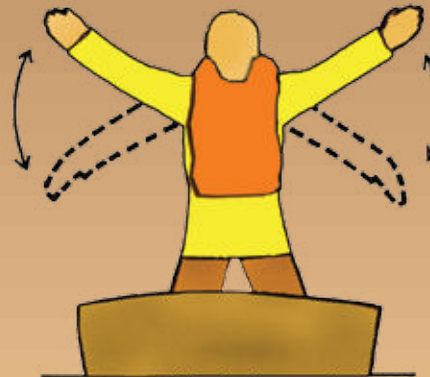


Water Safety





Step into a boat with care. Do not undo any mooring ropes until you are inside the boat.



If you get into difficulties be aware of how you can summon help. Shouting and waving arms at people on the bank is a good basic action.



Do not rely on mobile phone as an emergency measure. There may be no signal in your location or it may not work if it gets wet. Keep it in a waterproof bag.



If someone falls overboard retrieve them from the water via the stern of the boat and not by the side. Use an oar or rope to reach out to assist them.



Have an alternative signal method available in the boat.

Do not go out in a boat alone and always be safety aware and prepared. Ensure the boat is sound and everyone on board has life jackets. Take care when moving around a boat, think about it first, then move to where you need to go. Be constantly aware of your surroundings, tides, current and drift of the waters.

Boatmanship



When fishing along a river or canal bank you will be away from immediate help so it is a good idea to have a small first aid kit with you and know how to deal with basic first aid incidents that may occur. Catching a hook in your finger, or cutting your arm or finger are common as you move about, get caught on thorns and such like.

Being able to administer first aid and treat a victim for shock and hypothermia is also valuable.

Check		Call	
Is the person unresponsive and not breathing?		Get someone to call 999 or 112, or call them yourself.	
Compress			
Start compressions.			
Push hard and fast in the centre of the chest.			
Don't stop until help arrives.			

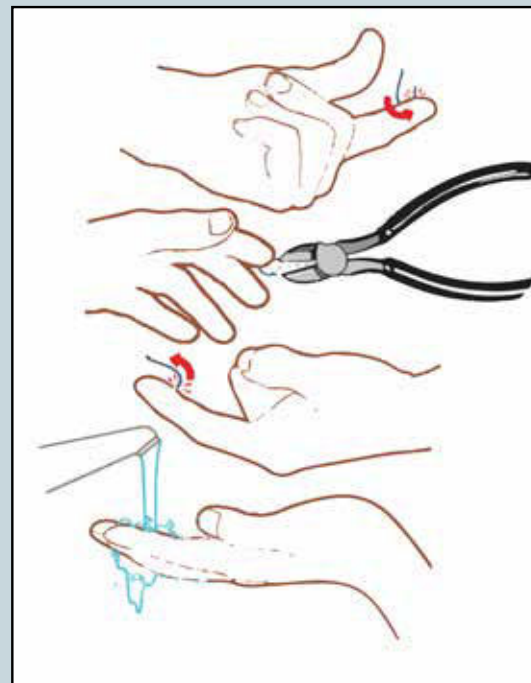
CPR

Weil's Disease

As fisher-folk we need to be aware of Weil's disease. Weil's Disease is spread in the urine of infected animals in water or soil. Slow moving rivers, ponds and canal are key areas of concern.

The infection enters through broken, grazed or cut skin especially on the hands and feet and sometimes through the lining of the mouth, nose and eyes.

Adhere to a rigid hygiene policy. Cover all cuts, scratches and abrasions with a waterproof dressing. Dry your hands if wet and use hand sanitizer from time to time. Avoid touching mouth and nose when hands are wet.



How to removing a hook from a finger

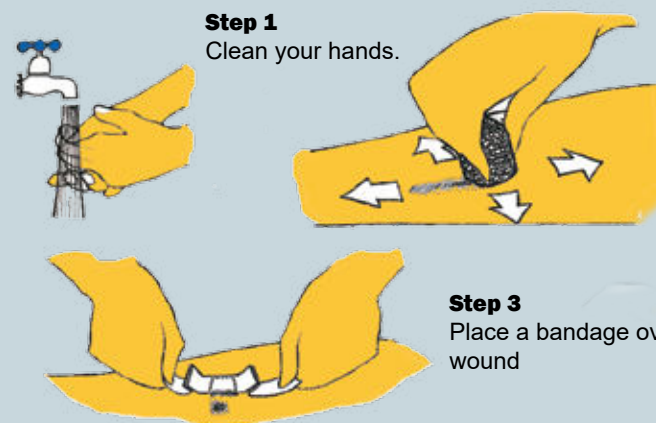
Removal of a hook is a painful experience so prepare the victim and be careful as you treat the wound.

If the hook is stuck in the skin it will have to be pushed through soft tissue to reveal the barb on the hook.

Next using a wire snips you remove the barb.

Once completed the hook is then reversed through the skin to remove it.

Wash the wound and apply antiseptic cream or TCP to the wound. Dry carefully and apply a bandage.



Step 1
Clean your hands.

Step 2
Clean the wound using a mild mixture of TCP and water pulling away from the wound and not across it.

Step 3
Place a bandage over the wound

First aid



Water ways and watercourses have their own unique eco-systems that have evolved overtime. While water in a waterway may look the same as any other, under a microscope, many tiny microbes are present. Transferring water, plants, dirt and grit from one location to another can have devastating effects on fish species and microscopic life in a watercourse. Invasive plants like knotweed, rhododendron and others are also a key concern, so seeds and leaves can also be carried on equipment.

Fishing at a location has a number of responsibilities:- care for the environment, practicing Leave no Trace principles, care for the fish we catch and release but at the end of a days fishing **our responsibilities rest in cleaning our equipment and protecting the fishing location.**

Its everyone's responsibility don't leave it to your fishing buddy.

Invasive plants and animals harm the environment, reduce the quality of fishing and spread disease. Please help to stop them by following the Check, Clean, Dry code.

CHECK

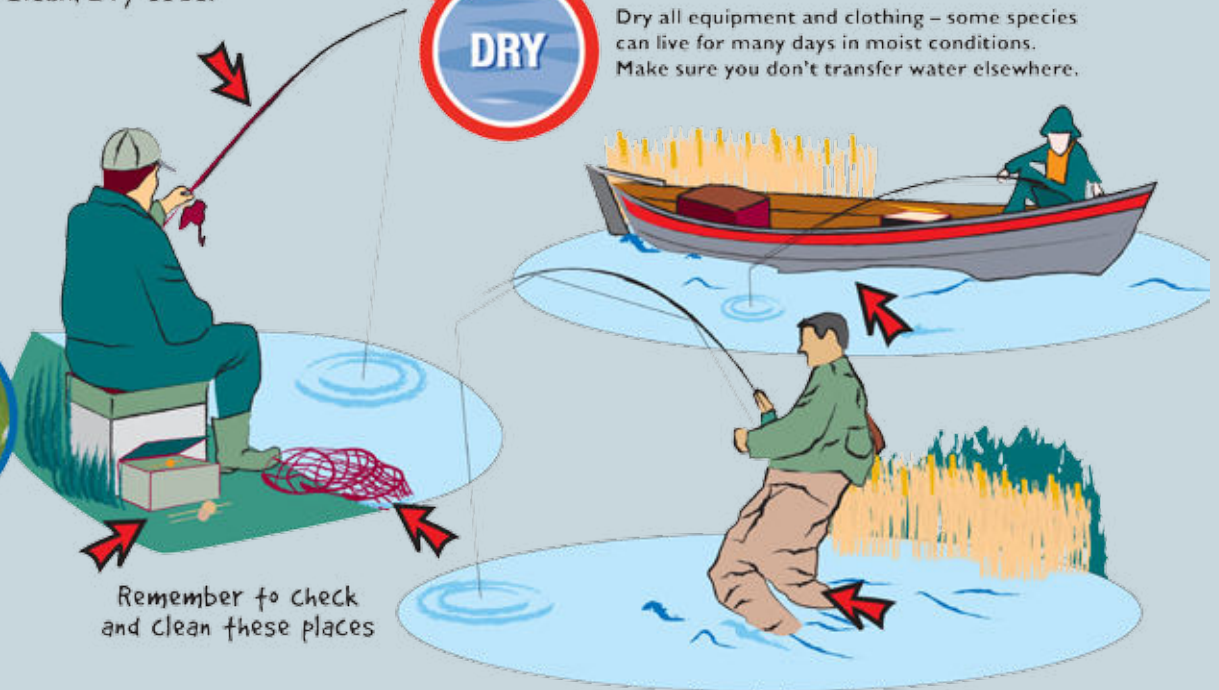
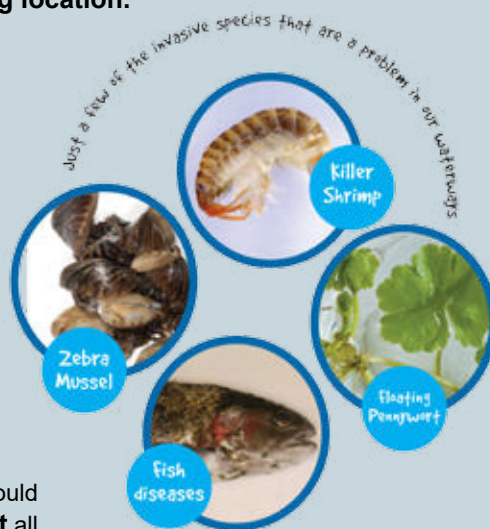
Check your equipment and clothing for living plants and animals. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp or hard to inspect.

CLEAN

Clean and wash all clothing, footwear and equipment, especially nets, thoroughly. Use hot water where possible. If you do come across any plants and animals, leave them at the water body where you found them.

DRY

Dry all equipment and clothing – some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.



Remember to check and clean these places

Prior to leaving any watercourse following a fishing trip, the angler should routinely visually **inspect** all equipment that has been used in or exposed to the water.

Remove and **safely** dispose of all attached plant or animal material. **Clean and disinfect** the equipment at the water's edge or later, as appropriate.

Invasive species



